



MEDIA RELEASE: NGA-04-10

DATE: November 9, 2004

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NGA: Leading the Way Through Geospatial Intelligence Standards

We live in a country with an abundance of geospatial data that gives us great opportunities but also creates significant challenges. In the public sector alone, there are billions of individual bits of geospatial data independently collected to meet diverse requirements that are often difficult to discover or use outside the “owning” organization. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) is leading the way for the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Intelligence Community’s (IC) standardization efforts to improve our ability to share geospatial information across the defense, intelligence, and homeland security communities.

NGA, as the functional manager for geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), created the GEOINT Standards Technical Working Group (GWG) in partnership with the Defense Information Systems Agency Information Standards Committee. The GWG serves as the community’s advocate for information technology standardization activities related to GEOINT.

The GWG will operate as a consensus-based forum serving the National System for Geospatial-Intelligence (NSG) community. It will include representatives from a wide range of relevant and affected stakeholders and will be chartered to exchange ideas and communicate issues regarding GEOINT standard requirements, implementation, and conformance. Specifically, the GWG will:

- Exchange information and discuss issues
- Form proposed DOD and IC consensus
- Represent DOD in external GEOINT standards development
- Sponsor, review, and confirm existing GEOINT standards development
- Recommend GEOINT standards for inclusion to DOD IT Standards and Profile Registry
- Assemble subject matter experts within DOD and the IC for GEOINT standards matters

NGA Director, retired Air Force Lt. Gen. James R. Clapper Jr., in his letter to the GWG stakeholders wrote, “Having the right standards is necessary to ensure system and information interoperability across the NSG community. We can identify and implement these standards by working together to make sure they meet our community requirements and support our enterprise systems.”

NGA’s director of the National Center for Geospatial Intelligence Standards will chair the GWG. The first meeting of the GWG is scheduled for December 2004.

NGA is a DOD combat support agency and a member of the National Intelligence Community whose mission is to provide timely, relevant, and accurate geospatial intelligence in support of our national security. Geospatial intelligence is the exploitation and analysis of imagery and geospatial information to describe, assess, and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities on the Earth. Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., NGA has major facilities in the Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia, and St. Louis, Mo. areas with NGA support teams worldwide.